

Military Options for Students with Disabilities

Since the inception of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), more opportunities have opened up for students with disabilities after they graduate.

Numerous individuals with disabilities either currently work for, or have worked with the U.S. Military as part of the civilian workforce, or as enlisted or commissioned personnel. The differences between these three areas and military *education* programs are addressed in this brochure.

Some of our more prominent American military leaders had Attention Deficit Disorder and/or Learning Disabilities, and still made amazing accomplishments:

- General Westmoreland served as the U.S. Superintendent of West Point, the commander of the U.S. military advisors in South Vietnam, and the Army's Chief of Staff; and
- President John F. Kennedy served as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, a U.S. Congressman, a U.S. Senator, and the 35th President of the United States.

The Civilian Workforce

The Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard all have a civilian workforce. These are civilians who work on U.S. military installations and base cities; in everything from barbershops and bowling alleys to engineering, education and nuclear science. These civilians also make up a large part of the work force in companies that contract with the U.S. Government. Examples are McDonnell-Douglas and Raytheon in which ADA compliance procedures must be followed.

A federal mandate states that all U.S. Military bases must have 10% of their civilian work force filled by individuals with disabilities. The U.S. Navy proudly boasts that they have been ranked # 5 in the nation of employers of individuals with

disabilities; this includes all private (civilian) sector corporations.

Enlisted vs. Commissioned

The United States Military requires that all enlisted and commissioned personnel be ready for "active duty." This means one must be ready physically, emotionally, and psychologically to protect the U.S., which includes going to war when called upon to do so. This "moment's notice" criteria also applies to those serving in the Reserves, and the Army and Air National Guards, which are discussed later.

Enlisted men/women can enter the military without a college degree. An enlistee is able to move up the ladder to become a non-commissioned officer with or without a college degree. The military will allow an individual to obtain a college degree after entering, but this is a very difficult task. The enlistee would have to be serving fulltime on active duty while taking university courses on the side.

Those students who are worried about taking college classes, but are still interested in a military career, can take advantage of the enlisted segment of the armed forces. Students can enter the military and be trained for jobs using hands-on skills. This is a way to avoid the typical core classes that scare many students away from going to college. Military Occupational Schools (MOS) are job specific and do not involve typical core subjects like math, English, or science, which are needed for a college degree. However, depending on the specific job or job field that an enlistee chooses, there will be aspects of these subjects included in the school.

A *commissioned* officer means one enters the military *after* obtaining a college degree, *or* obtains his/her degree after entering the military. In both cases the person would be considered a commissioned officer once they have a degree. There are programs that provide officer's training and/or military scholarships to those interested in

entering the armed forces after college. **Note:** Just because someone has a degree does not mean that he/she must enter the military as an officer. That person still has a choice to go in as enlisted or commissioned.

Education-Based Military Programs

Members of the U.S. Congress, for each congressional district, offer Military Academy Appointments, which result in a tuition-free education (*2004 West Point*). To attend any of the academies, one must (at a minimum) obtain letters of recommendation from one local Congressman, two U.S. Senators, and one from the Vice President of the United States. Potential cadets must be able to obtain a high school diploma; pass the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) - (*passing scores for the ASVAB vary with each branch*); have an acceptable GPA score; and pass the physical fitness test plus the medical exams. (See resources on the back for contact information for each of the academies: Army-West Point; Navy-Annapolis; Air Force-US Air Force Academy; and Coast Guard-US Coast Guard Academy. **Note:** The Marine Corp does not have their own academy; Marine cadets attend Annapolis, the Navy's academy.

ROTC stands for Reserve Officer Training Corps. ROTC cadets move up through the ranks of the cadets by obtaining high PFT (Physical Fitness Test) scores, exhibiting strong leadership qualities and competitive academic scores. Both ROTC and Military Academy graduates enter the military as commissioned officers. Those who are interested in the ROTC Program may attend a university in Arizona or anywhere in America that offers ROTC. Arizona schools offering ROTC Programs are ASU, U of A, NAU and Embry Riddle Aeronautical University (see Arizona University information on back).

Students with disabilities may enter a ROTC program: 1) if they can meet the physical, medical and academic entry requirements; and 2) if they can handle the ROTC coursework, both

academically and physically without assistance. The ROTC programs are "competitive," meaning that a student has to compete against other students for entry into the program and/or scholarships. Students may attend a ROTC program by: 1) applying for competitive ROTC scholarships; 2) self-paying; or 3) receiving other - non ROTC - types of scholarships, grants or student loans. ROTC cadets must be eligible for active duty before they enroll in the program. Cadets must be able to show acceptable scores on the ASVAB and SATs or ACTs. (The average SAT score for an ROTC scholarship is 1200, and for the ACT, it is 24). Entry ASVAB scores vary with each branch.

At the university level, students with disabilities can receive appropriate accommodations for core classes. *Due to the fact the ROTC programs are for military preparedness, they do not provide for ADA compliance during ROTC courses. All cadets must be able to handle the ROTC academic and physical components by themselves, without accommodations.* For example, a student with a learning disability might be able to complete the ROTC courses without outside help, and pass the physical fitness, and medical portions, yet he may need accommodations for the English and math requirements for college graduation. For the college core classes, the cadet is able to seek out needed accommodations or services through the Disabilities Compliance Office on campus.

Reserves - National Guards - Coast Guard

These branches are great for those who wish to stay closer to home. The Reserves and National Guards allow men/women to serve two days a month and two weeks per year for 4-6 years. This reduced time commitment allows one to attend college if they wish, or be employed outside the military.

Keep in mind however, *Reservists can be activated by the President during war time to serve in other countries or combat areas, the same as the full time active duty soldier's commitment.*

Furthermore, officer’s training programs and financial assistance are offered to Reservists going fulltime to an accredited 2 year college, or 4 year university. This must take place during their 4-6 year commitment to the Reserves or National Guards. Upon graduating with a 4 year degree, he/she may go fulltime active duty into their preferred branch of military service as a commissioned officer; or serve as an officer in the National Guards or Reserves.

Unlike the Reserves and National Guards, the Coast Guard is a fulltime position. One is stationed along the U.S. coastline. Those wishing to become an officer may attend the Coast Guard Academy in New London, CT, or enter with a 4 year degree. Entry into the academy or service is similar to the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines.

Dispelling Myths

Myth: If a student has been on an IEP he or she cannot join the military. **False:** If a student can obtain a high school diploma, pass the ASVAB, and obtain high enough scores on the physical fitness tests and medical exams; he or she can enter the military. However, graduation certificates are not allowed, and those receiving their GED are allowed entry on a case-by-case basis.

Resources

Military Academies

- Air Force, US Air Force Academy, www.usafa.af.mil
- Navy/Marine, Annapolis, www.nadn.navy.mil
- ARMY, West Point, www.usma.edu
- Coast Guard, US Coast Guard Academy, www.cga.edu

US Armed Forces

- US Air Force Recruitment Center, www.af.mil, 800-423-USAF

- Arizona Naval Recruitment Center, www.navy.mil, 800-USA-NAVY
- US Marine Recruitment Center, www.usmc.mil, 800-MARINES
- US Army Recruiting Office, www.army.mil, 800-USA-ARMY
- US Coast Guard, www.uscg.mil/uscg.shtm, 800-GET-USCG
- Reserves and Guards: Reserves (*contact preferred branch*), www.defenselink.mil/ra; Air National Guard, 800-TO-GO-ANG; and Army National Guard, 800-GO-GUARD
- Civil Air Patrol, www.cap.gov, 602-392-7503
- Private website with additional military career and scholarship information. www.usmilitary.com

Arizona Universities ROTC Programs

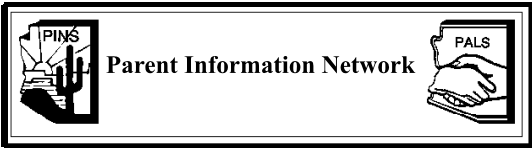
- University of Arizona (Tucson), University’s homepage: www.arizona.edu, Army, Navy-Marine, Air Force ROTC, 520-621-3705, Disability Resource 520-621-3705
- Northern Arizona University (Flagstaff), University’s homepage: www.nau.edu, Army, Navy-Marine, Air Force ROTC, 888-MORE-NAU, Disability Resource 928-523-8773
- Arizona State University (Tempe), University’s homepage: www.asu.edu, Army, Navy-Marine, Air Force ROTC, 480-965-9011, Disability Resource 480-965-1234
- Embry Riddle Aeronautical University (Prescott), University’s homepage: www.pr.erau.edu, Air Force ROTC, & Civil Air Patrol, 800-888-3728, Disability Resource 928-777-3700

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- Sergeant Morrow. (2001, March). Email interviews. Casa Grande, AZ: Arizona Army National Guard.
- United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. 1999). *Regulations concerning Federal Sector Equal Employment Opportunity: 29 CFR Part 1614*. Washington, DC.
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Beyond High School

Exploring Military Options

for

Students with Disabilities

(Civilian Positions, ROTC,

Academies, Active Duty,

Reserves, and National Guard)